

Q46

Please provide any comments about your experiences during your time at EPA that demonstrate support for or a lack of support for a culture of scientific integrity at the Agency, and why.

- 1 (b) (5) I have worked too hard to throw this job away (b) (5). I am still worried, because it weakens risk decisions. (b) (6)
- 2 Lack of support for integrity by suppressing releasing information to EPA staff and public.
- 3 (b) (5) Quality regulations were often revised. (b) (5)
- 5 POLITICS AND PHOTO OPPORTUNITIES ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO ALL EPA MANAGERS.
- 6 (b) (6) I have honestly seen very little outside of lipservice to scientific integrity and any policy on the matter. Indeed, Senior Leadership is quite clear that policy overrides science in most of our work (apart from pure research not related to policy). To that end, the science basis for regulatory action is consistently undermined and no one stands up to that.
- 7 Research collaboration opportunity was provided
- 8 EPA has become a political weapon, much like the IRS was a few years ago. Our decisions are too often based on one-sided, left-leaning partisan politics and we tend to promote staff who will go along with the accepted narrative and not rock the boat.
- 9 My experience regarding staff recommendations to the decision makers, is that staff provide a scientific basis for their recommendations and then decision makers decide things primarily based on political repercussions of a decision and thus decisions are made that are not based on science but based on the politics. i.e., is the state or the regulated community not supportive of the staff's recommendation based on the science and if so then decision makers decide an alternative
- 10 (b) (5)
- 11 (b) (5)
- 12 (b) (5), (b) (6)
- 13 Words that were not allowed to be used in any documents, scientific or not. Clauses that had to be added to contracts that contained unsound information and/or requirements. The firing of most of EPA's high level scientists. The lack of funding for any independent scientific endeavor. The total disregard for rules and regulations and the rolling back of same to the benefit of the people or companies that the rules and/or regulations were put in place to curb. ETC.
- 14 The vast majority of interactions with my peers and managers demonstrate a commitment to science and truth. The leadership of the Agency, for the most part, continued to support this, despite some of the actions of the previous administration. There still seems to be a cloud around discussing anything like climate change.
- 15 There are many incidents. (b) (5) Make sure to spell out what will be happening to folks who disrespect scientific discussions and justification, falsify facts, retaliate/harass employees in order to get fudged results, or those who reward unethical employees.
- 16 No comment
- 17 EPA has always maintained a high degree of scientific integrity; stating otherwise is an insult to all of our scientists. Lawmakers failing to take the advice of the scientists is the crux of the problem.
- 18 Too influenced by political appointees - depends entirely on the administration. Was fine during Obama and seems OK during Biden.
- 19 Early results regarding air quality research received immediate attention and support from senior science and policy leaders
- 20 Political influence played a strong role in decision-making at project sites especially federally operated sites. It is evident in discussions and letters that federal sites receive a pass while EPA's scientific opinions are ignored entirely and/or suppressed.
- 21 Now that Trump is gone things should get better but I have seen middle management prevent good science and data from supporting policy and reg decisions! We must weed out management that seeks to prevent good regs and policies.
- 22 (b) (5)
- 23 There are so many staff scientists who want to make science policy decisions rather than do the detailed work necessary to provide the scientific basis for a decision. Management is too eager to please the most vocal science staff rather than reward those who actually do the science work. There is a culture of engagement and making sure staff feel okay rather than commitment to doing the work to support difficult decisions about human health and the environment.
- 24 There has been a serious effort to support a culture of scientific integrity, but results are very poor because of strong politicized environment.
- 25 Within (b) (6) my personal experiences were always very positive and supportive. My work products never rose to the attention of national leadership. The information I received through agency, watch dog, and national news source indicated that others had encountered a lack of support for scientific integrity.
- 26 EPA career staff support the culture of scientific integrity.
- 27 Creating a national award for scientific integrity shows a commitment to it. However, the award was missing from the latest call for nominees, so we had to hunt to see if it was still something that the Agency was promoting. Like many other thrusts over the years, it was hard to know if scientific integrity was a one-shot deal, or if it's really a cultural objective. I believe it's the latter, but there needs to be more attention to this sort of detail if we want a full buy-in from the staff.
- 28 (b) (5), (b) (6)
- 29 There is a general lack of trust between the RMs and science reviewers. RMs are in the drivers' seat and are very arrogant, generally speaking. Science reviewers are not treated with respect and dignity, despite having Ph.Ds. and a ton of experience (b) (5). Work atmosphere is not friendly, generally speaking. (b) (6) this heavy workload is very unreasonable.
- 30 An EPA published report used a subset of available data rather than the set I recommended. There was not a statement in the Report that a subset was used or of the rationale for the decision.
- 31 Clear evidence of issues regarding climate change, yet all information was removed from EPA website. (Think ostrich with head in sand)
- 32 Under the previous administration, it didn't seem like there was support for a culture of scientific integrity. It has only been under this new administration where it has been talked about.
- 33 I have been with the Agency over 20 years. Since 2021 the support for a culture of scientific as greatly improved and is probably at the highest level since I started at the Agency
- 34 My own managers have always encouraged professional development and integrity at the highest level, irrespective of the administration
- 35 When a decision needed to be made, political considerations seemed to win out
- 36 (b) (6), (b) (5)
- During my time with (b) (6), I have found a consistently improving environment and concerted effort by management to uphold scientific integrity.
- 37 Lack of support for the timely release of information involved in well intentioned but open ended review processes that are not time limited.
- 38 I felt like many policy decisions were not driven by science and data but rather by politics.
- 39 SI training made it clear policy decisions don't have to follow the science given statutory and other limitations. SI really becomes an ethical and professional obligation
- 40 Not sure. Management pulls rank.
- 41 Our first and second line supervisors and staff have a clear mission to protect the environment. (b) (5)
- 42 See previous comments. Sad when politics and lies carry the day for scientific organizations. Very demotivating, very successful in grooming very poor leaders, and very good at hurting our reputation as an agency.
- 43 Please see previous responses. Generally, there is lack of support for any scientific conclusions drawn which do not support the agenda of the administration in place, and (b) (5) This has surprisingly gotten worse in the current administration.
- 44 Politics always gets in the way of scientific integrity. Most scientists are not managers either, which is a problem. Improperly educated managers should and cannot make important scientific decisions.
- 45 We had all hand meetings to ensure support for culture/scientific integrity,
- 46 EPA does not have a culture of scientific integrity when it comes to the (b) (5)
- 47 Always this finger pointing...you need a third option. Something like: this question doesn't effect me at all but I think I smell personal agendas being pushed
- 48 (b) (6) did their best to protect businesses from the environment, instead of the other way around, and (b) (5)

49 Political appointees didn't even try to hide the fact that they were overruling science/data to make decisions, because there are effectively no consequences for such interference aside from verbal admonishment after it is too late to salvage the scientific integrity of a particular decision. Even if this survey shows that scientific integrity was compromised during 2019-2020, that will not come as a surprise to anyone and I have no faith that there will be any consequences.

50 (b) (5)

51 Overall, I think career scientists show high support for a culture of scientific integrity and want only to put out their best work. These goals are sometimes thwarted by political agendas out of their control.

52 My managers have always supported my conclusions based in science because they trust my opinion

53

We get priority orders to do work from on high sometimes, with unrealistic deadlines. There are clear implications there as to the expected results. Instead, we retain our integrity and do the best we can in the time allotted. If it isn't perfect and generally satisfying, that's too bad. But it makes life much harder to do, including downstream effects, and messes with our schedules entirely.

54 The focus on LEAN management and unreasonable timelines for complex products, lack of professional development for staff, has so seriously degraded morale that senior and mid career staff have elected to retire or leave our office. Attrition in our office is so high that in 2 years time the remaining senior staff will retire and mid career staff that should be stepping into leadership roles will move to a different job. Remaining staff will be ill equipped to handle difficult scientific investigations in support of (b) (6)

55 (b) (5). Despite everyone in Agency knowing this is an environmental crisis with scientific consensus around human causation.

56 (b) (6). They understand the work loads and integrity of the staff, as they came up thru the ranks themselves. They are also looking out for the needs and balanced structure of the employees, and also maintain the same high standard for the agency's scientific integrity.

57 na

58

When questions did not specify career or political, my comments regarding questions about (b) (6) were answered completely about (b) (6) political leadership, not (b) (6) career leadership.

59 I read the newspaper and heard reports about arguments made by political appointees across the agency, and every time they spoke, it sounded like a lie

60

This comes and goes with administrations. With environmental-friendly and mission-driven managers, I received full support. During last administration, I received pushback, denials, and no support.

61

Strong support at the Agency - from (b) (6) - (b) (6) at the Agency and (b) (6) has been doing an excellent job (b) (6).

62 The previous administration did not support scientific integrity. With the new administration, science & scientific integrity at EPA feels renewed

63 It was been two years filled with courage and holding fast to truths in the mist of great attacks on honesty.

64 EPA's mission on climate change and enforcement in general was not supported by the administration in place during the period covered by this survey.

65 I haven't had that type of experience

66 No comment

67 It was incredibly clear that the Agency under the Trump administration did not care about the threat of climate change on human health and we failed to undertake scientific inquiry and associated rulemaking to adequately protect the American people.

68 (b) (6)

69 Oversight of State Environmental programs have not been as strict as they need to be. We need to make sure that all state regulatory programs are up to date on National Criteria and also that all state regulatory programs are protective of both Tribal and non-Tribal communities. We have a trust responsibility and we also have to be aware of not letting lax oversight and enforcement lead to potential Environmental Justice issues.

70 I think the lack of support a culture of scientific integrity had to do with the lack of support for researching specific topics (b) (5) as much as support or lack thereof for being able to conduct and communicate research results on a given topic.

71 (b) (5)

72 At a political level (b) (5). Limited support towards impact of pollutants on Tribal, rural and underrepresented communities. (No support of EJ) Rollback of air emission standards WOTUS setbacks

73 I am an end-user of EPA's scientific products (b) (6) (b) (6) I have not seen an example of misuse - especially not a deliberate misuse - of an emission standard.

74

The tone set from the top is very important. Messaging as relayed in the press, especially direct quotes or videos, has a large impact on what I believe will be the response to my scientific activities and possibly controversial findings. Also press coverage of how others in similar positions at other Agencies and Departments were being treated had a significant impact on my personal opinions of what was acceptable or what the possible risks for speaking out might be. For example the firing of scientists at the CDC and the relocation of scientists at USDA and other departments researching what was clearly communicated as the "wrong" science (in this case Climate Change research) had a very chilling effect on me personally as my financial and family situations could not absorb legal costs, risk losing my job, or face possibly a forced move to another state. For example: climate scientists at USDA were forced to leave Maryland and go to Kansas or quit, BLM scientists were forced to leave Washington DC and go to Colorado or quit, as reported by the Washington Post, NY Times, CNN, Fox News and other outlets.

75 (b) (5)

76

I feel like my direct manager has good support of what needs to be done but I feel like things are too determined on if it fits into the administration priorities. If it doesn't fit in the box it can't be released.

77 Supervisors have bent over backwards to be fair & honest in my yearly performance evaluations & have always backed my Project Officer decisions

78 I do not feel or have never felt threatened I would be reprimanded in any way as a result if I were to question any analysis findings.

79 (b) (5), (b) (6)

80 (b) (5), (b) (6)

81 (b) (5)

82 Depends on the Administration - mostly political stance on science backed facts in last 2 years - previous years science could be proven and relied to be accurate

83 (b) (5), (b) (6)

84 lack of support - With climate change being viewed politically, scientific work in this field is constantly being hindered. Until this can be removed from the equation all scientific results are constantly facing challenges, delays, cancellations, etc... This does not yield "open expression(s)" unfortunately. [Copied and pasted in other answers]

85 none

86 Not supported to do anything aside from what is assigned. Peer-review publications and analyzing available data are not encouraged and considered stepping outside of your lane. Overall inquiry in our data is discouraged.

87 Too cozy with industry at the highest level of the agency.

88 In general, the employees at EPA do not use science. For instance, the Agency's current response to the pandemic (after vaccine is widely available) takes a seat to people's feelings. New employees hired have less science backgrounds than they used to (higher education degrees aside) (b) (5), (b) (6)

89 In the past 8 months, I have had a positive experience with the culture of scientific integrity at the EPA

90 The culture allows for questions to be asked.

91 Reorg at (b) (6) was disruptive in many ways, including whom to ask about integrity issues, I think it is better now (b) (6)

92 Managers have provided an opportunity to discuss the science supporting decisions. Managers also support discussion of emerging science. There are challenges associated with communicating complex science to managers with varying scientific knowledge and understanding. This is especially true for the emerging scientific areas.

93 Over the past two years, political motivations superseded scientific integrity at EPA. Decisions were made about policies at the national level and (b) (6) staff were then forced to try to make the science fit the policy decisions. This poorly impacted morale in (b) (6) and made many people question the overall integrity of EPA as an institution.

94 It seemed like policy decisions on regulations were based on political directives, not science. But, transparency was lacking, so it's hard to judge exactly why decisions were made

95

The constant pressure to accomplish more with progressively fewer resources and dwindling administrative support (typically leaving the majority of administrative tasks for researchers to complete themselves) forces many to generate deliverables (publications) that lack rigor on topics that are often designed/directed to demonstrate the toxicity of a substance to get a headline despite the use of completely unrealistic experimental conditions/systems that are not meaningful for protecting public health and decision making. Additionally, the QA requirements placed on basic science researchers are extremely oppressive and the Agency's scientific integrity would be better supported by the replacement of some QA requirements with guidance/requirements for quality control. Further, researchers are effectively discouraged from making their methods transparent via publication despite ready accessibility of open-source repositories.

96 It seemed to me that the industry had an upper hand in rejecting the policies based on sound science and implementing the policies that were favorable to them but not necessarily to the general public and the environment.

97 If we try to improve this process, it needs to be in a way that can't be undone easily by a political appointee

98 Well, the previous administration made every attempt to eliminate scientific opinion.

99 I think as a whole the scientists want to properly conduct their research but I think policies and the House and Senate put rules and regulations in the way to block that research

100 Efforts seem oriented toward streamlining the pipeline instead of ensuring those activities on the pipeline are scientifically supported.

101 Could be better

102 (b) (6), (b) (5)

103 Perception is everything... we have lost our focus and are starting to get back on track. The difficulty always is when we lose focus and our partners notice this change due to political changes. How do we maintain their trust going forward?

104 There were several instances where a scientific or economic analysis or finding was disbelieved by (b) (6) political appointees. In some cases this resulted in new staff conducting these analyses or political micromanagement of further analyses. In other cases a candid discussion with all of the relevant scientists or economists yielded an agreeable path forward that supported the scientific integrity of that analysis. Thus, it was case dependent, but even the willingness to do it in select cases undermines the CULTURE of scientific integrity.

105 2017-2020 demonstrated to me how important a strong scientific integrity presence is for EPA. (b) (5)

106 In general, my work has been supported by regional management, my supervisor, and HQ (in providing funding) for conducting research, traveling and presenting at conferences, and supporting publication of my work. I have also been supported in providing feedback on rules that pertain to agency business.

107 As long as politicians have the rights to suppress science in agencies, EPA cannot have scientific integrity. Even if all the data is correct, the work is correct, etc., some politician can shelve it.

108 I think there is a general interest and drive to maintain a culture of scientific integrity among staff - many of us are scientists and want to do good scientific work that would be upheld if challenged (and would be respected by other scientists - we're a proud bunch). The issue has been political considerations that senior level managers have to cope with, and that can at times override the most scientifically supportable (and perhaps protective) position. The views of a particular administration can filter down throughout an organization - some of us sometimes question why we go to such trouble to be so meticulous with the scientific analysis behind our recommendations when we know that the resulting decision will be to go with that option which has the least political blowback. But I'm glad to know of so many that do not allow this to discourage them from following good science in their work.

109 The culture and scientific integrity become more rigid and impervious as it moves up the chain of management.

110 In the years relative to this survey, as scientific information was evaluated and developed at the staff level there was a lack of support for scientific integrity as the information was briefed up the management chain due to political interference or management retaliation to staff.

111 (b) (5)

112 There was a general lack of respect for expertise and a severe underuse of analysis by upper level political decision makers over the time period targeted by this survey (2019-2020). Staff level expertise was not relied upon. Even just considering the open denial of the evidence behind climate change by upper level politicals created an environment that felt like staff were expected to swallow unsupported theories or go against a very publicly held position by upper level politicals.

113 EPA supports scientific integrity in high-level statements, but undermines scientific integrity in the implementation of QA and allocation of scientific staff time. (b) (5), (b) (6)

114 In the months I have been here, which is entirely under the Biden Administration, scientific integrity has been strong, and I get the sense that it is being restored from an earlier, damaged state. Morale also seems to be up among my colleagues that have been here since the Trump Administration, and I get the sense from working with them that this increase in scientific integrity since January 2021 has something to do with it.

115 N/A

116 Lack of support of science at the political level slowed down progress, suppressed important public information, and resulted in absolutely garbage regulatory decisions that ignored data, science, public health and common sense. (b) (5)

117 It has been proven and written about by reputable news sources that scientific integrity was suppressed during the prior administration. Additionally, (b) (5) shameful!

118 Delays in managerial review of scientific work, in one case for almost a year. Unjustified pushback on standard methods from program offices.

119 In general I think EPA has a decent SI policy and culture. However, during that last 'administration' that system was definitely bent. (b) (5) We felt we had to do this in order to do research. Additionally, during RAP process there were high level political decisions made to limit the scope of (b) (5) to only quantification when the science clearly dictated a need for effects research. I was also involved as a technical expert on an ISA that was completed but not released for several years due to politics. Likewise, there was a website that was supposed to be made public involving (b) (5) but release of that was also delayed for years. SI and political independence are critical robust science that supports decision making.

120 In general scientific integrity was always in considered and demonstrated.

121 To much emphasis is directed towards research scientific integrity and not on the routine analytical data collection operations undertaken within the regions. That's why the regions feel little support with regards to scientific integrity. This function needs to be removed from (b) (6) and centralized at HQs so that the regional scientific integrity issues can be dealt with. (b) (6) has a research take on integrity that doesn't apply to the regions because we don't perform research. The regions don't perform research however, we generate data or receive data generated on our behalf through contracts, grants and data entered into our national databases.

122 N/A

123 In my office, the cultural of scientific integrity has improved significantly over the years. The career level managers I work for did an excellent job trying to protect scientific integrity. In particular, my division director and both office directors during that period defended it at significant significant professional risk. They deserve recognition for their efforts.

124 Many QA/QC and product clearance activities were carried out through ad hoc processes. However, this situation was partly a result of recent reorganization and is improving

125 (b) (5), (b) (6)

126 The last administration did not support science, integrity or ethics. I think this new administration will turn that around.

127 Some HQ Trump Administration political appointees demonstrated a lack of support for a culture of scientific integrity. Purposefully ignored scientists and attorneys

128 I have participated in a couple of training sessions on scientific integrity, conducted by (b) (6). I found those educational and valuable.

129 In my experience, EPA is largely a reactive organization. EPA will respond to parties with power, whether obtained through a lawsuit or simple economic power. This sense of pressing deadlines interferes with our ability to take proactive measures to improve our scientific integrity. Major assumptions, such as the safety of concentration-based standards, are never examined even after 40 years of evidence for bioaccumulation. Our failure to make progress on climate change will forever be a black mark on the Agency.

130 My experience is based on observations of shortened public comment periods and rushed issuance of revised regulations that significantly affect the citizens of the United States (b) (5).

131 At the (b) (6) organizational levels, career civil servants and their direct career management supported scientific integrity through implementation of and access to the Scientific Integrity program. (b) (6), including the Regional Administrator, supported their management and personnel through training, meetings, email announcements, including contacts, etc. Unfortunately, the level of support from top level Agency political appointees continued to be dependent on those in charge and their political viewpoints as opposed to the science. It is one thing to make a decision based on the combination of scientific, policy, and other factors. However, it is not acceptable to make decisions that muzzle scientists, ignoring or manipulating scientific input and/or outcomes, etc.

132 New employee

133

(b) (5)

134 N/A (New employee)

135 (b) (6) was a political hack and brought in people like (b) (6) to implement industry's agenda which was a odds with the agency's mission to protect public health

136

The open discussion that occurs in my branch pertaining to data interpretation and application of guidelines and regulations enables idea sharing and critiques which benefit the branch and division as a whole. The only experiences I have pertaining to lack of support of scientific integrity at the Agency concern the susceptibility of the Agency to political fluctuations that may silence some voices depending on the views of a particular administration. Consistency in policy supports scientific integrity when those in positions of power enable free and open communication supported by data.

137 (b) (6), (b) (5) . Management often overruled staff on scientific judgements. Some conclusions felt political is order to give more favorable outcomes to (b) (6) .

138 Just yesterday 5/18/21 and today 5/19/21 - had to vigorously insist, with colleague, supervisor and Division Director to get some recognition of need for basic science, bare minimum in terms of data quality, to even get mentioned in a policy development that affects conclusions that must be based on environmental field sampling and lab analysis. That shouldn't have to happen. In fact I cited the Scientific Integrity Policy in support of my position.

139

(b) (6) and the predecessor organizations within (b) (6) have, in my opinion, put scientific facts and findings first in decision making. Outside (b) (6) influence from program offices and regions can sometimes make this challenging and the previous Administration's political climate made the enforcement of scientific integrity next to impossible. (b) (5), (b) (6)

140 N/A

141 I felt constrained in both speaking and training opportunities and felt had to be less than fully open about activities at EPA, as well as in providing opinions, concerns or status responses due to concerns that I would be reprimanded for such open discussions with federal, state and local partners.

142 Lots of training and dedicated science staff devoted to scientific integrity supports it.

143

Two examples tell the broader story. At the Agency level, we've seen nothing but obfuscation on (b) (5) , (b) (6)

his is policy by Pollyanna, not based on evidence or even sound reasoning. Which can only make the rest of us imagine it is cover, propaganda for the real reasons, which we can only imagine relate to some unspoken political agenda, and we are pawns in service of that agenda. This would be irritating in normal circumstances. With lives on the line during covid, it was almost intolerable, with the only saving grace being the thought that perhaps another administration would get elected, or a new policy direction would be taken post-election, if it were the same administration.

144

(b) (6), (b) (5)

145 Finally providing access to journals has been a big step in showing support. The last two years have been sketchy but I have a backlog of papers to read so it didn't hurt me badly. Newer hires may have had some gripes though.

146 We do not use data consistently, transparently, or even well. We do not use basic statistical analysis or concepts when evaluating data in house or submitted by states. In my long career, I have yet to see a regulatory decision guided by an analysis or an analytical critique of an analysis presented to EPA. Agency decision-makers are satisfied with any rationale put forward to justify the least effort/political fuss solution to get to done; then, let the courts sort it out.

147 The overall culture and atmosphere within EPA and EPA (b) (6) is that you do not go against EPA management or EPA political appointees on any matter to include issues regarding scientific integrity. Staff are always fearful of retaliation in speaking their own minds based on their own scientific opinions, research, and conclusions.

148 N/A

149 Delays in review of manuscripts--program offices sitting on documents for weeks to months. Anything to do with (b) (5) completely 86ed by last administration. Totally politically motivated.

150 (b) (5), (b) (6)

151 I did not encounter political interference in most of my work, with one exception. In that case, I believe it was an instance of self-censorship, with a particular career staff believing that the region should not pursue a case that would not be politically supported by HQ under the Trump administration.

152 I have been at EPA for (b) (6) . I have observed that the enforcement of scientific integrity policy, regardless of the actual wording of to whom the policy applicable, appears to vary considerably at the political appointee (either acting or confirmed) level depending on who wins the election. If scientific integrity and rule of law are fully honored by an incoming administration, then scientific integrity policies are enforced. If scientific integrity and rule of law are not fully honored by an incoming administration, then such policies are applied on a piece-meal basis and even then only apply to career staff, not political staff.

153 Generally, career managers are for the most part supportive of scientific integrity in principal. But in many cases, scientific merit is not a main consideration in decision-making, and decisions are not made with input from scientific experts or by technically-qualified managers.

154

Silos and failure to integrate activities undermines the usefulness and application of work to environmental and human health questions. Examples: EPA's failure to integrate regulatory requirements into its financial systems for thing such as (b) (5) . How is it that so much money can go out in assistance and contracts without any means to monitor or generate reports that tell management the quality being applied? The (b) (6) has a question about quality assurance (b) (5) in their system but has not enabled it to be queried in their reporting generation system. There are several hundred professionals working to assure the quality of environmental information at the agency that could support the integrity of information generation, collection, production and use better if they could quantify and perform oversight more efficiently.

155 EPA's Scientific Integrity Official has done a lot to develop and maintain the program and needs resources to fully implement the vision.

156 The last administration didn't support anything contrary to their agenda.

157 Lack of transparency during the last administration.

158 I found the prior administration refreshing. hard questions were asked of science products to ensure scientists were not overstating results. i have found that some (b) (6) scientists consistently overstate their results because of their own personal opinions and biases and claim it's there "expert judgement" but it's just conjecture really. conjecture and guessing is not "expert judgement" but biased lack of scientific integrity and we cannot have agency scientific integrity if we're not willing to push back.

159 I don't think that scientific integrity is the first priority. I don't think it is intertwined into daily operations.

160

The decisions were made without concern about science, only effect on industry. Then, maybe, science would be selected to support the decisions, but sometimes they didn't even bother.

161 (b) (5), (b) (6)

162 Within the (b) (6) there are pervasive trust and control issues. Senior staff are not trusted as scientifically proficient, however they are blamed for science, letters, reviews, put forward that were modified to please political appointees. The 2019-2020 period was very guarded and controlled.

163

As you might expect, this changes with Administrations. In general, over my (b) (6) scientific integrity seemed a given -- we cared about it, and there was support for it. However, the past four years felt like a chokehold. Our research related to rulemaking from the previous Administration was required to come to an abrupt halt, which was both time and resource intensive. It was also demoralizing. We were also asked to not use common scientific words and to not consider basic scientific concepts that were well-supported and long-used in our disciplines.

164 Based on my interactions, I have always felt that the agency's scientists take very seriously the integrity of their work.

165 Lack of support was observed in multiple ways: (b) (5)

166 General promotion of scientific integrity utilized in regulatory matters - the regulated community is more well-informed these days so, decisions needed to be based on science and presented in an understandable manner.

167 As in most organizations; if your views are accepted by the established 'consensus' or agenda you're fine, but you may never question it, even objectively

168 For most of my (b) (6) at EPA, there was strong scientific integrity, staff and management worked together to bring the best science to decision making. The last 4 years destroyed a lot of trust and developed policies based on greed and dishonesty.

169 In a capitalist society, it is still all about the money. Whether to clean up a hazardous waste site or provide clean drinking water, the economics must be addressed. Scientists and engineers at EPA are great with the science, but the lack of managerial and financial understanding will continue to cause the agency issues.

170 With the exception of the last 4 yrs, the political level has tended to be more willing to support scientific integrity than the career leadership, who frequently shy away from controversial topics. Extended reviews, desire to avoid hot button issues, etc.

171 (b) (5)

172 NA

173 n

174

While I was not directly involved in any of these cases and I believe that staff and career managers generally do support scientific integrity, both in the region and in Headquarters, I am concerned about Headquarters interference/delay/suppression of information regarding (b) (5)

I'm also concerned about regional career management possibly not standing up to Headquarters political leaders more.

175 My experience has been positive and I have always had the support from my supervisors for a culture of scientific integrity

176 I think I have had support for the culture of scientific integrity since I joined the Agency in (b) (6). The issue now is the politics on both sides of the aisle cause issues.

177 (b) (5)

178

Total lack of support for scientific integrity. (b) (5), (b) (6), (b) (7)(A)

179 The Office of Scientific Integrity refused to answer any of my emails or when I submitted a complaint using their online system. I don't think your office is doing its job.

180

When EPA Headquarters issued anything really dumb, anti-environment & anti-science, the managers in my regional office always acted like it's a great idea. I think they should at least say "this is a horrible idea, but we're going to have to do it anyway". Why do they have to act like it really make sense & is good enviro policy? Loyalty and obedience like they're part of the Mob.

181 I regularly experienced political interference in my work. It was demoralizing and cost me on my PARS. But more importantly it put the American people at risk

182

My PI is supportive of me taking the time to repeat experiments to improve assay robustness for the sake of data quality, even when this means the work takes longer than planned.

183 N/A

184

I think that EPA, at its core, (aside from the politics of the moment) is fully engrained in and operates within the scientific method of hypothesis, inquiry, assembling the facts, then puzzling those together to tease out the answers. I have observed that as a common theme for myself and among my peers across the United States and abroad in my 17 years at EPA. And we find answers. Sometimes they aren't happy answers. Sometimes the answers are repressed sometimes they are encouraged, but I think many of us operate under the "Truth-Will-Out" principle, so you keep your head down and keep on pushing forward, re-formulating the words of the message to suit the ears of those in charge, while retaining their meaning.

185 My scientific opinions have generally been supported or given thought to.

186

It can take years to get the Agency to respond to needs that in the broader scientific community are imminent. Suspected issues are often not proactively looked into due to difficulties in moving funds over to emerging priorities. For instance, it has been suspected for many years now that (b) (5)

Yet, the agency has not been nimble, agile, or proactive in getting ahead of these problems, or even responding in a timely manner after the problems have been identified. Communication to the public also leaves room for improvement. EPA scientists are great at communicating with themselves and the greater scientific community, but are not as great with communicating with policymakers and the general public. Improvements are being made, but the Agency needs to be less afraid of communicating the science and uncertainty behind the science. The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly increased the general public's understanding of data, uncertainty, and the research process. EPA should continue to build the public's confidence in the scientific process by proactively communicating emerging and existing environmental issues.

187 In previous meetings there has been concern about how staff decisions would be received by management. I am not sure to what degree this concern affected the decision making process. However, I disliked that this was a concern as the scientists in this group should be able to operate in an environment that places scientific integrity above all else.

188 The (b) (6) is very willing to ignore or over-emphasize different pieces of evidence in order to get the outcome they desire. (b) (5)

189 I observed many conclusions being drawn from data without sufficient statistical analysis. I was also shocked to find that many critical data analyses were not performed because employees were "too busy."

190 The administration at the time (TRUMP) would remove or not provide the "true" documented scientific facts or simply chose not to believe them, nor would they publish

191 I work in a program that (b) (6) and they have so much political power that even when they don't exert it, senior career leaders are afraid they will and that fear affects our ability to make sound policy decisions.

192 I have never felt that scientific integrity was compromised at EPA (b) (6) during the past 2 years or ever.

193 I am actively experiencing the second generation of a programmatic culture of how to hide and avoid providing information both outward and upward. The third generation is being groomed and beginning to enter the managerial ranks and although may acknowledge the flaws the current culture has towards scientific integrity are accepting these flaws as a necessary way of conducting our business.

194 Creating an automatic discarding of reports, guidance, etc that don't get approved in a certain amount of time only works if the review process is working. But if nothing is getting reviewed then the whole process breaks down and is a sham, because no one is going to say my report or guidance is trashed because the political gatekeeper didn't even review it. So there is a process on paper that no one follows.

195 Having been at EPA as a contractor or Fed for over 20 years it seems that the support is becoming more politically based and getting away from the science.

196 Most of the time we are given the time to get the right answer, without pushing towards a specific conclusion. I have experience with scientists that want to label anything that is different than what they have done in the past as "bad chemistry" while ignoring evidence to the contrary. This has caused tensions with managers that do not understand the chemistries of the sections that they manage. These managers do not have the experience to make a decision and it aggravates the problem.

197

I have no experiences that would demonstrate support or lack of support for a culture of scientific integrity at the Agency as my job is in (b) (6). I do support our Agency/management (b) (6)

198 Political appointees can NOT be allowed to relegate climate change to the back burner.

199 Support - introduction or increased telework opportunities during the pandemic Lack of Support - (1) construction conditions by non-epa neighboring activities impacting facility structure (superficially or in depth), implication of costs to rectify (and the possible unseen conditions) and non or controlled communication. (2) Lack of willingness to speak with other programs / offices to assess a whole picture of needs that could end up in better planning or consolidation / reduction of efforts or resources.

200 (b) (5)

201 In general, due to the implementation of "Lean" principles at the highest agency levels, I feel that timeliness has become a more important metric than quality. This has and may continue to demonstrate a lack of support for a culture of scientific integrity.

202 As a (b) (6) the quality of data we produce is very important as it is used for decision-making and has a direct impact on human health and the environment. This is emphasized on a daily basis. We also attend a yearly training on ethics and importance of quality assurance.

203 Please see previous answers.

204 "All animals are equal. Some animals are more equal than others." Statement from Napoleon the Pig in George Orwell's novel 'Animal Farm'. Sometimes people are selected for high-priority research projects based on political favoritism and not necessarily competence.

205 No comment

206 Management has always been mindful of the multi-disciplinary elements necessary for quality regulatory and program decisions while simultaneously cultivating a work environment reflecting an emphasis on exceptional scientific basis for these decisions.

207

There is often a push to jump on projects that are hot topics and to have results quickly. There continues to be struggles with funding lab initiatives to continue general research efforts that support the scientific community. The pressure to keep labs funded and to turn over results quickly has led to some questionable methods development and research efforts.

208

My work involves more engineering than science, so I've largely answered in regards to that. The culture of integrity and honesty goes well beyond scientific integrity. I have seen staff at all levels be more cautious about communicating scientific findings rather than get the attention of political appointees. So appointees have had a chilling effect without being explicitly challenged. Lastly, I actually think it makes sense to consider politics when expressing findings, so as to be able to do the most good possible given the current political climate.



209 I hope the scientific integrity issues at EPA are stronger now with a new administration. We felt (scientists in general at EPA) the last four years were not listened to. I hope the new administration does for the good of the environment the "right" thing and restores science to its proper place in EPA regulations. The previous administration was all about letting industry have their way, and EPA science be damned.

210 (b) (5) (b) (5)

211 Did you read the news? (b) (5) Most of my interactions with the last administration related to workgroups/science policy and not strict science, but I did see that more decisions were moved from the career level to the political level, so I would imagine the same is true of strict science.

212 from what I've heard, presenting at scientific conferences under the prior administration became much more difficult, more roadblocks

213 lack of support for a culture of scientific integrity: managers and (b) (6) want to check boxes, they don't want to actually make sure the science is sound. I gave several presentations over the last two years, all internally reviewed, with values that varied widely across different versions, as I worked through the data and analysis and performed more tests. Not one of the internal reviewers, managers, or (b) (6) noticed these widely varying values between presentations, yet they always nitpicked on grammar, punctuation, and specific wording, especially in introductory slides. This in the end siphoned my time away from improving my work. I do not feel anyone in the management chain has the expertise to properly QA my work, which makes sense! They can't be experts on every single person's field. But don't give them the power to nitpick on useless things and suck our time away from doing our work. Trust the experts to be the experts.

214 (b) (5), (b) (6)

215 Have not been at EPA long enough to comment on this (less than 1 year).

216 We were asked to assist a program office with a risk evaluation. The program office has a strong relationship with industry interest groups and despite a rigorous process where staff toxicologists evaluated the evidence and a mode of action call for this particular chemical and a health protective risk value, (b) (5) No explanation was given to (b) (6) scientists as to why these decisions were made.

217 Managers at EPA seem to be extremely risk-averse in terms of how science is viewed outside the Agency, in the political realm. I've experienced this through directives that certain words should be avoided when writing reports and papers (b) (5). A colleague in (b) (6) had a very non-controversial report held from release by political leadership for several years - it was just released this month.

218 My primary concern comes from policies that were in place during the Trump administration regarding the use of certain terminology (b) (5) Although this never influenced or affected my research, it was always in the back of my mind when developing publications or future research plans. For this reason, some of my scores reflect badly on the EPA's culture of scientific integrity, although my experience with immediate supervisors never reflected anything by support for scientific integrity.

219 A tremendous lack of support for scientific integrity exists in the (b) (6) This is one corner of EPA that for some reason has shown a lack of regard for science and peer review time and time again to the point where EPA staff involved in such reviews are (b) (5) I've noticed this to a great extent when (b) (6) is involved as staff don't feel comfortable expressing opinions because they rely on these same folks in the (b) (6) for future research dollars. This has been a huge problem for more than a decade now. Its the same small group of people responsible for the problem and a primary reason why we've made so little progress addressing (b) (5) In these small corners of EPA, scientific integrity has been brushed aside for many years regardless of the administration and political appointees in place.

220 (b) (5)

221 My experience within my branch, division, and within (b) (6) so far has been nothing but supportive and collaborative in regard to my contributions to data analysis and research.

222 (b) (5)

223 No Comment

224 Politics prevailed over the science and dictated outcomes

225 Having problem with managers in another (b) (6) bad-mouthing and criticizing existing research to internal and external audiences. Criticism based on facts is fine but criticism based on personal wishes, conflicts with their own proposed research and conducting the criticisms without informing the principal researchers is not acceptable

226 Frankly, this survey and all the recent all hands meetings stand out like a sore thumb. Understandably, in two prior years and even before something was different. WHY then was EPA not able to widely, publicly, in transparent fashion raise out loud such concerns ... was the Agency in grid lock by forces that oppose objectivity? It's apparent all this points to problems in the past. So what will be in place to speak out no matter what year or what conditions? And now I think all these communications are a bit much ... but ok, it's an important topic!

227 Interesting situation where the old administrator sent out a mass mailer throwing the unions under the bus and using misleading information to frame them as making bad decisions. This made me question if we could trust what the administrator was saying in other areas, as he was taking advantage of this situation for unknown gain. (b) (5)

(b) (5). This was all very concerning in regards to scientific integrity.

228 I have never seen any lack of scientific integrity at the divisional levels. Obviously, as you go up the organization, politics and policy become bigger factors. The administrator made a statement meant to support scientific integrity that was very insulting. He said something to the effect that "science is back at EPA" and it really never went away.

229 Lack of support of scientific integrity due to the shut down of climate research four years ago. Many researcher's work was suppressed and the issue was not acknowledged. I know it is due to administration but it didn't seem to be handled well by EPA and there was a lack of support.

230 (b) (5)

231 Honestly, this survey is too narrowly focused on "science." There was an endless series of stories in major media about EPA ignoring past practice and career staff expertise for the past four years. Even if our day-to-day work wasn't directly involved in cooking scientific reviews or ignoring health risks to communities, we all saw the coverage and listened to the talking points from the political appointees. The Dems aren't always above criticism either. As career people, we just do the best we can with the conditions and resources available to us.

232 EPA's SI office has tried to promote a positive SI method as best it could, but had been hampered by the White House.

233 I guess is time to get a reality check and train to discern fact from fake, many coworkers believe in absurd conspiracy theories from social media, many coming from elected officials in high positions at our own government. This is a great disservice for scientific integrity.

234 Working on a rulemaking was backwards. The conclusion was set before the analysis occurred and data was reviewed to try and make the conclusion that was set forth by political appointees before any data was reviewed.

235 When the Trump administration came in (b) (5), (b) (6) That was incredibly demoralizing and was a sign that high-level career officials were not going to stand up for scientific integrity. On the other hand, lower-level career staff have told me that during the Trump administration, (b) (5) That shows a commitment to scientific integrity.

236 In general, EPA managers and political appointees are risk averse and are mainly concerned with avoiding media coverage. EPA managers regularly discourage work and generation of environmental data that will identify problems that need to be addressed.

237 My branch chief actively encourages us to tell them about problems/concerns/things that aren't working well/etc, which helps create a comfortable atmosphere for voicing our thoughts openly with them. As a result, if I ever had concerns about scientific integrity, I would feel okay about expressing those concerns to my managers/supervisors. We are a tight-knit group with high performance, appreciation for each other, and clear expectations to perform the best scientific work that we can, regardless of the political implications. We are proud of doing top-quality work, so if I identified something of concern regarding scientific integrity, my peers would be very concerned about it as well and we would all work to address it.

238 During the administration at that time, I felt there was not any support for scientific integrity by the Agency. All the hard work the scientists and engineers did to reduce harmful air emissions were being dismantled or deregulated

239 no experience

240 I believe the Agency does what it can depending on who is in Office at the time. I appreciate the efforts each Regional Office does in keeping data accurate and our environment clean. This can only be done if someone in Office does not hinder the scientific process and not try to 'mute' our voices!

241 My management has been supportive of the applied research I've been able to conduct on methods development and exposure assessment.

242 Would have liked more pushback from Senior management on allowing for adequate review time for technical documents and ensuring that science issues were responded to by the Program Offices.

243 lack of support: (b) (5)

244 Training and operating procedures are helpful.

245 (b) (5)

246 The previous years under the previous Administration were terrible at EPA, where scientific integrity were attacked. This Administration is much better, but even this Administration seems to be ducking the science in certain circumstances.

247 In my (b) (6) work, a few of my cases were thwarted by political appointees who caused long delays in decision making, questioned (b) (6) and application of laws, and ultimately refused to go forward with (b) (6) that were scientifically supported and clearly warranted.

248 Career EPA managers should protect staff from scientific integrity offenses by political appointees. In the previous administration, they did not. Political appointees may direct the topics of research conducted but not the interpretation of data. Career managers should not waste staff time on disingenuous topics such as ELMS.

249 (b) (5), (b) (6) . No communication, no explanation. Just stopped in their tracks. (b) (5), (b) (6) e wasted hours developing different graphics. Throughout experiences like these, senior (b) (6) career managers never pushed back. They allowed the political to make unreasonable demands rooted in unreality to support claims that they wanted to make.

250 working with EPA has made me very conscious of the my surroundings and the environment and have been teaching my grandkids not to litter.

251 (b) (5)

252 I have always felt that EPA provides a strong and supportive culture for scientific integrity and in my career have never experienced any attempt to keep me from bringing forth factual data and suggestions. Policy decisions are based on multiple factors, but I have never had science not be one of the factors considered.

253 I don't really need to say thing other than past administration was not a friend of the environment.

254 During the 2 year period between 2019 and 2020, the lack of support for scientific integrity primarily came from the political leadership. There was only one senior career person who routinely demonstrated lack of support for scientific integrity.

255 Prior administration political appointees suppressed science when it conflicted with agendas of the regulated community

256 My supervisor has an open door policy.

257 There is a very high level of support in (b) (6) The last administration seemed to have a very political agenda that held back good science.

258 To be clear, the lack of scientific integrity in (b) (6) has not been driven by one administration or another. The current senior leadership created this environment based on the priorities that they chose for (b) (6) and EPA science. The organizations top leaders are ultimately responsible for setting high standards and enabling their staff to deliver high-quality products. Period. More reorganization and processes will not solve this problem.

259 Our group develops complex numerical models and is not directly involved in regulatory policy making. No one has hindered our model development nor the publication/presentation of our simulation results (that I know of). We have been allowed to conduct our research with the utmost scientific integrity.

260 1) When opinions are ignored without explanation integrity suffers. 2) When management stops ongoing research activity that might lead to negative political press integrity suffers.

261 Good luck, this is an important issue that requires more than just window dressings, but rather a deep dive look into the conflicts of interest (professionally and organizationally) relative to the regulatory framework of our Agency.

262 Conflicts of interest for political appointees regionally and nationally lacked support for a culture of scientific integrity.

263 I felt very uncomfortable correcting a supervisor whose treatment of a scientific document did not seem consistent with the Scientific Integrity policy. Disagreeing with the technical expert because she thought the question was new (it was not) and, I believe had caught the attention of a higher manager who added her own misinterpretation. I called the matter to my supervisor's attention in a round about way. I do believe we have a good outcome, but it would be helpful for managers to understand that "I don't like that. Change it." is not a valid reason to alter a scientific finding. "I don't get it. Explain it." Is perfectly acceptable and helpful. the decision, of course, is up to the manager, but should not be justified by changing the science.

264 It seemed downgraded/not talked about as it had in the prior Administration (my only other experience to compare it to), not valued, not a priority, sometimes not respected, though still a part of the work of the agency on a quieter plane.

265 Please refer to my previous comments. It was a not a great time at the EPA. All sense of normalcy, progress, upliftment, adherence to laws, norms were non existent

266 There was great support for 40 years until Trump and Wheeler came to EPA.

267 (b) (6) senior management is more concerned with (b) (6) opinion of our work, that the scientist who produce it. They verbalize that reports can take longer than 60 days, but all actions, for years, have communicated that the 60 day deadline is the most import aspect of work. A very authoritarian, chain of command style has been in place since (b) (6) arrived.

268 Many years ago I published several studies showing that mortality from specific diseases was significantly higher in regions where a specific crop was grown, which was treated with a specific pesticide. I (naively) thought that this would be a reason for (b) (6) to do a more careful study. (b) (5), (b) (6)

269 My experiences are primarily with (b) (6) leadership and their overreach on the scientific content of our products. In the past two years alone, (b) (6) leadership killed projects that were years in the making, held up projects (by requesting additional reviews, etc.) that did not reach their "correct" scientific conclusions, held briefings that would span several hours and days where they questioned the expertise of staff scientists, and attempted to alter the product conclusions just before publication. (b) (6) management were supportive of staff, but could do nothing to help in most situations.

270 NA

271 Only have experienced total support for any work I do for (b) (6) yrs.!!!

272 I have seen an example by (b) (6) leadership to address a potential scientific integrity issue verbally, and not in writing. Not documented, so no actual integrity issue? This was likely less about a lack of support of a culture of scientific integrity and more about "choosing the right battles" during that administration.

273 (b) (6), (b) (5)

274 At times, transparency in decisions at the political level was inadequate. Decisions sometimes were made in opposition to the scientific evidence and recommendations provided by career employees without a clear explanation.

275 I know that former (b) (6) managers shielded me and my work from (b) (6) political appointees that were unnecessarily critical or unsupportive.

276 To produce quality Risk Assessments and risk estimates, EPA needs improved models, better data (beyond CDR and TRI) on uses/businesses, and more robust scientific grounding in assumptions about business tasks, task duration, PPE nonuse/use.

277 (b) (5), (b) (6)

278 Starting in 2021 with the new administration, there seems to be a very open dialogue and support for culture of scientific integrity which is fantastic

279 Unfortunately, when a Republican is in office, the EPA all of sudden lacks "scientific integrity" because certain pet projects are not advanced. The media, politicians, and environmentalists turn a blind eye to all the core programs that continue to work at an extremely high level of scientific integrity and continue to protect human health and the environment! EPA's core programs (CAA, CWA, SDWA, CERCLA, RCRA) are the bedrock of this agency! This position is a slap in the face to this agency and its employees who take pride in their work. It's just political gamesmanship.